

# The Role of the School



The role of the school within the Ready School Initiative is to provide an opportunity for all children from diverse backgrounds to succeed in school.

Schools are responsible for accepting and addressing the learning needs of all children who are old enough to enter kindergarten. Teachers and administrators must have the knowledge, resources, and support to ensure they are ready to teach children who come to school with a broad range of individual differences. These can include differences in cultural backgrounds, health and physical development, social and emotional development, language development and communication, cognition and general knowledge about the world.

There are several key features of a *Ready School*, beginning with the teacher and the school administrator. The teacher must be knowledgeable of child development and developmentally appropriate classroom practices. The teacher should be tuned into individual children's interests and abilities and be able to provide a classroom environment where children can be actively involved in learning activities. The teacher should also be able to work in a partnership with families and other important adults in the child's life. The school administrator, like the classroom teacher, should equally be as knowledgeable in the developmental areas, plus supportive of classroom teachers, nurture family involvement and put the needs of children first.

The classroom environment and curriculum are two other key features. In the classroom children should have opportunities to learn through play, to have hands-on experiences with a variety of materials, experience predictable routines, and be nurtured in their learning by consistent, caring adults. The curriculum, along with instructional strategies, should be developmentally appropriate and provide meaningful learning experiences for each child to build upon their individual abilities and interests.

## Sampling of Transition Activities for the Schools to Initiate

- Invite parents to visit the school with their child during the school year before the child begins kindergarten.
- In the spring, invite preschools, child care centers and homes, into the school for a tour.
- Start compiling a list of next year's kindergarten class and send invitations to the families for all appropriate school events such as open houses, carnivals, fine arts programs, and literacy or math nights.
- Send a personal letter or postcard from the teacher to all new students in late summer welcoming them to the kindergarten class.
- Hold a back-to-school night in August. Have parents and children visit the classroom, take part in sample classroom activities, and meet other children and parents.
- Make a *Welcome to Kindergarten* pamphlet with information about your program and who to contact.
- Give out matching, themed-based tee-shirts to all incoming kindergartners to wear on the first day of school.
- Host school cookouts or Popsicle nights right before school begins to meet the teacher and view the classroom.

